

Sustainability at Portland State University Playbook 2013-2018



This document summarizes Portland State University’s sustainability planning as of December 2013, identifies gaps, and articulates the path forward toward greater clarity of goals and deployment of related strategies. The document offers a value proposition for how PSU—and other universities—can align operations and provide an educational and research foundation for sustainability.

Sustainability at PSU Playbook: 2013-2018

The Institute for Sustainable Solutions and partners across campus undertook the process of developing a Sustainability Playbook in 2012-13 to guide future planning and work toward effective assessment and institutionalization of sustainability at Portland State University.

Guiding principles for sustainability at PSU:

These principles represent crosscutting commitments that shape the approach ISS takes to advancing education, research and community engagement.

- **Learning happens everywhere.** It happens in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in the community where students get engaged in projects and faculty conduct research. Experiential elements are core to the multiple pathways to learning we are developing, as we seek to make our campus and the communities we work in “Living Laboratories” of innovation and learning.
- **We are committed to translating Research to Action.** We seek, through our teaching, research and engagement, to have a positive impact on the future of our community and to address key challenges we face as a society. We convene partners to facilitate dialogue on important topics and to co-produce knowledge that can make a difference to the future of the region and the world.

What follows are the overarching goals set by the Playbook process and initiatives—a combination of tactical and institutionalization strategies—that illustrate how each goal will be achieved within the next five years.

Education and Curriculum

Goal: PSU provides transparent and accessible curricular pathways to success through selected programs and majors.

Initiatives: Design and implement undergraduate sustainability certificate; design and implement certificate programs for food systems and energy; identify and assess key sustainability competencies; continue to expand and improve sustainability course identification.

Goal: PSU provides distinctive interdisciplinary programs that align with community needs.

Initiatives: Support faculty development activities to promote the integration of sustainability into targeted programs and majors; enhance communication to students about sustainability-related academic, co-curricular and career pathways.

Goal: PSU is internationally recognized for social entrepreneurship education that graduates changemakers focused on building a better future.

Initiatives: Integrate changemaker campus goals with broader university goals and communication; develop new

social innovation curriculum; support student changemaker activities; highlight exemplary Community Environmental Services partnerships and projects (Port of Portland, Whole Foods Market, etc.) as tangible examples of changemaker initiatives.

Goal: PSU recognized as a leader in problem-based, project-based curriculum that has measurable community impact.

Initiatives: Expand faculty development focused on problem-based learning in partnership with Office for Academic Innovation; identify long term Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative partner communities and develop assessment, development and communication mechanisms to support those partnerships; establish a campus-based Living Lab program; expand opportunities for curricular engagement with Community Environmental Services projects.

Goal: Disciplinary and interdisciplinary sustainability curriculum is valued and supported through institutional incentives.

Initiatives: Organize sustainability curriculum symposia and support efforts to publish scholarship of teaching and learning; conduct assessment on barriers and opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and research and develop mechanisms to support and reward these programs.

Student Experience and Engagement

Goal: Sustainability is embedded throughout the student experience. Student life at PSU is healthy, accessible, inclusive, and vibrant.

Initiatives: Integrate sustainability into goals for student life and experience; expand student engagement in university sustainability initiatives and events that highlight sustainability values and skills.

Goal: Enrollment Management and Student Affairs division is a national leader in sustainability thought, practice and innovation.

Initiatives: Establish professional development on sustainability theory and practice as division's first-cross division assessment initiative; refine long-term goals and vision; create a student sustainability leadership rubric for assessment and advancement.

Goal: PSU is recognized as an innovative leader in developing exemplary co-curricular programs that demonstrate measurable success in cultivating change skills and abilities in our students.

Initiatives: Broaden platform and strengthen institutional integration of co-curricular programs with student affairs structure, curricular programs, and undergraduate research; strengthen Sustainability Leadership Center programs with deeper community partnerships; create and share models, processes, and best practices for connecting student leadership, campus outreach, and sustainability education; assess and launch a revamped Solutions Generator initiative that focuses on supporting campus sustainability initiatives and project ideas that stem from curricular work

Goal: PSU students embrace shared values and model behaviors, attitudes and skills that recognize the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic systems.

Initiatives: Strengthen campus-wide understanding of connections between social, economic, and environmental

justice; develop framework to assess student literacy of sustainability principles; tailor programs and communications to PSU's diverse student body

Research

Goal: PSU is a recognized leader in policy-relevant urban sustainability research that integrates across transportation, planning, ecology, social issues, business, community development, energy, and related disciplines.

Initiatives: Use Research to Action symposia, research stimulus funding, and other means to strengthen connections between sustainability research communities on and off campus; catalyze faculty teams to work with community partners on a neighborhood-focused research agenda; support the creation of long term funding streams for emergent research efforts; build capacity to operationalize data compiled by research and service units such as Community Environmental Services.

Goal: PSU is a recognized leader in policy-relevant research into ecosystem services supporting urbanizing regions.

Initiatives: Build stronger connections between ecosystem service practice community and PSU through IGERT and Cascadia Ecosystem Services Partnership, Research to Action symposia, research stimulus funding, and other mechanisms; catalyze faculty teams to work with community partners on high-profile ecosystem service issues affecting Portland region; support the creation of long term funding streams for emergent research efforts.

Goal: PSU is a recognized leader in advancing social sustainability research.

Initiatives: Support development of research agendas for social determinants of health, aging and other social sustainability topics; use Research to Action symposia, research stimulus funding, and other mechanisms to catalyze faculty teams to engage with community partners to take on high-profile social sustainability issues affecting the Portland region to conduct problem-based interdisciplinary research; support the creation of long term funding streams for emergent research efforts.

Community Engagement

Goal: PSU is known regionally and nationally for catalyzing and advancing dialogue and action around priority issues related to urban sustainability, ecosystem services and social sustainability.

Initiatives: Strengthen regional urban sustainability partnerships—including the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, EcoDistricts and others—and organize collective action aligned with PSU research; expand Cascadia Ecosystems Partnership connecting practitioner needs with PSU research, host key events and public forums on priority issues.

Goal: PSU is known nationally for delivering sustainability science and education that is relevant and connected to on-the-ground practitioner needs.

Initiatives: Expand and clarify pathways for students to develop workplace relevant skills and a broadly applicable changemaker orientation; develop and implement Pathways to Green Careers framework; expand on Living Lab

curriculum being developed in partnership with the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education; explore existing organizational resources that could be expanded to explore new opportunities that further innovation in energy and climate change; increase support for student experience-based service and research units; expand the use of externally funded graduate assistants to work with key PSU partners.

Goal: PSU, through the Institute for Sustainable Solutions and Research and Strategic Partnerships, is seen as a trustworthy and effective forum for convening around complex issues.

Initiatives: Develop a Decision Theater as a venue for collaborative dialog around complex issues (energy, conservation, etc.); explore broader engagement for PSU in Columbia River management and policy; expand partnerships and research connections through the Forest Forum.

Goal: PSU Impact Entrepreneurs is a key partner for aspiring and existing social entrepreneurs and a leader in strengthening the ecosystem for social entrepreneurship on campus and in the community.

Initiatives: Develop and implement online social entrepreneurship courses and certificates; convene a community of social entrepreneurship in the Portland metro area; provide training and support services for a diverse set of social entrepreneurs; strengthen offering of local and international field studies at PSU.

Goal: PSU's Community Environmental Services is recognized as a model for innovative collaboration between students and external organizations and expands into new markets.

Initiatives: Create sustainable organizational model and improve functionality of CES at PSU; expand to keep pace with increasing market demand for materials management expertise and consulting; share successful aspects of program with other Universities and regions.

Goal: PSU's sustainability alumni are connected to the university and provide a vibrant link between the university and the broader sustainability community in Portland and beyond.

Initiatives: Develop sustainability alumni network; include alumni in campus sustainability events; engage alumni in mentorship roles for students with an interest in working in sustainability-related jobs.

Campus Operations

Goal: Buildings are maintained in accordance with LEED for Existing Buildings, Operations & Maintenance (EB+OM) certification standards, and all new construction or major renovations will meet LEED Gold or higher standards.

Initiatives: Conduct a LEED EB+OM feasibility study; pursue LEED EB+OM in a cluster of prioritized buildings on campus; expand network of sustainability liaisons in buildings throughout campus; increase participation in Climate Champions program; adopt policies that support sustainable operations; continue building optimization efforts such as energy efficiency retrofits and operation hours scheduling; establish building recommissioning program.

Goal: PSU will be a carbon neutral campus by 2040 using strategies outlined in the Climate Action Plan.

Initiatives: Divest from fossil fuels; establish standards for efficient space management; upgrade to efficient equipment and systems when replacements are due; explore co-gen opportunities and expanding district loop

beyond PSU; invest in lighting and other efficiency retrofits; implement power management settings across campus; expand renewable energy production; expand energy education programs for staff, faculty, and students; establish carbon offset program. (See also materials management goals and initiatives.)

Goal: PSU's natural environment is maintained in an exemplary fashion including sustainable stormwater management, reduced use of chemicals and diverse, ecologically responsible plantings.

Initiatives: Develop and implement tree maintenance plan based on Tree Campus USA guidelines; review Integrated Pest Management Program annually; update Stormwater Management Plan; extend Montgomery Green Street; maintain Salmon Safe certification; implement a green space conservation policy.

Goal: PSU is a leader in waste reduction, water conservation, fiscal responsibility and climate action through its operations practices and policies.

Initiatives: Implement a centralized approach to purchasing that enables tracking, standardizes transactions, and defaults to campus-wide standards for environmentally preferable and socially responsible purchasing; adopt a policy addressing the full life cycle of materials including procurement, use, and disposition; implement an integrated life cycle approach in design and construction of campus buildings; improve printing policies and reduce free print quota for students; create consistent messaging across campus to support waste reduction, energy efficiency and water conservation best practices.

Goal: PSU will maintain 2010 levels of travel emissions.

Initiatives: Establish a campus based carbon offset program for university travel (and potentially other activities); update accounting system to allow tracking of PSU sponsored travel miles.

Institutional Policies and Administration

Goal: PSU's Institute for Sustainable Solutions has clear processes for advancing sustainability research and measuring the impact of its programs.

Initiatives: Develop and deploy comprehensive assessment strategy for ISS; implement transparent funding criteria and screen for ISS investments; execute on goals laid out in Sustainability Playbook.

Goal: PSU has a cohesive sustainability brand and communications strategy that is consistent with the university's overarching brand and delivers clear information about sustainability resources on campus.

Initiatives: Update pdx.edu/sustainability website to reflect an accurate picture of sustainability assets across campus and provide clear pathways for individuals to get involved; align communications strategies with PSU goals and Sustainability Playbook.

Goal: The philanthropic community has heightened awareness of PSU sustainability initiatives and views them as long-term investments that benefit the entire region.

Initiatives: Develop and deploy strategy for endowment and other long term funding mechanisms; develop multi-year budget for sustainability initiatives; integrate alumni network with advancement.

Conclusion:

The Institute for Sustainable Solutions will play a lead role in supporting and implementing the goals listed above, convening partners across the university and the community, assessing programs along the way, communicating about our progress and making course corrections as necessary. We look forward to working with our partners to make true institutional sustainability a reality at Portland State.